

National Park Service



I Carried the Torch of Leadership:



The Legacy of the
National Council of Negro Women

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune First President of NCNW (1935-1949)

Founded on December 5, 1935, by Mary McLeod Bethune, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) was one of the leading African American women's organizations of the 20th century. Serving as the organization's Founder and first President, Dr. Bethune established the NCNW as the "organization of organizations" that would serve as the voice of African American women throughout the nation and the world. During Dr. Bethune's tenure (1935-1949), the NCNW played a significant role in raising funds for World War II, petitioning for African American women to be a part of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs) and assuring that African American women were a part of the political process.

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(R to L) Mary McLeod Bethune (far right), Dorothy Ferebee, Daisy Lampkin, and unidentified woman
at National Council of Negro Women Annual Meeting, 1947

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Pease Photography

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Mary McLeod Bethune (center) and NCNW delegates at the United States Department of Labor, 1947
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Mary McLeod Bethune (right) and fellow Delegate representing India, at the NCNW Annual Meeting, 1947
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



All hands pressed into service to get out the post convention mailing at the Council House, 1947
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Mary McLeod Bethune (right) visiting the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
at England General Hospital. Anne Hall (standing)
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Official Army Photo

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Mary McLeod Bethune at a baseball game, 1945
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Riley Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Preparing a reception at the Council House to honor
Ambassador Joseph D. Charles of Haiti and Minister Charles D.B. King of Liberia, 1948.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Mary McLeod Bethune (far right) pinning a corsage on First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (center) at a banquet, 1937
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R) W.E.B. DuBois, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Walter White traveled to San Francisco as consultants to the organizing meeting of the United Nations. April 1945.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Griff Davis, Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(R to L) Mary McLeod Bethune and Dorothy Irene Height. Date Unknown.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA

Dr. Dorothy Ferebee **Second President of NCNW(1949-1953)**

Prior to becoming NCNW President in 1953, Dr. Dorothy Ferebee served as Mary McLeod Bethune's personal physician and the organization's national treasurer. During her tenure as president, Dr. Ferebee worked to improve African Americans access to health care education. The NCNW also continued their efforts to end discrimination against African Americans and women, especially in the areas of voting, access to housing, and service in the military. Dr. Ferebee also established a "Nine Point Program" with the goal of achieving "basic civil rights through education and legislation."

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Ferebee, Date Unknown.
Photo Credit: Chase Photo

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Ferebee (center) and two unidentified women at the Council House, Date Unknown.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Ferebee receiving a presentation. Date Unknown
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Mary McLeod Bethune (left), wearing the Haitian Medal of Honor and Merit,
and Dorothy Ferebee, Date Unknown.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Ferebee. Date Unknown.
Photo Credit: Harris & Ewing

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R) Judge Jean Murell Capers, Dorothy Ferebee, and Vivian Carter Mason
in the parlor of the Council House, Date Unknown.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R): Dorothy Ferebee, unidentified woman, Madam Sekou Toure of Guinea-Bissau, unidentified woman, Dorothy Irene Height, and others in Washington, D.C., 1950s.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Ferebee (center), NCNW members, and an African delegation, including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (right), looking at plaque in Washington, D.C., 1950s.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Ferebee (right) presenting NCNW citation to Mai Edith Wiles Padmore of Trinidad, 1950.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA

Vivian Carter Mason **Third President of the NCNW(1953-1957)**

Prior to becoming the Third President of the National Council of Negro Women, Vivian Carter Mason served as vice-president of the national organization and president of the Norfolk Chapter. In an effort to centralize the NCNW, Mrs. Mason was successful in bringing local chapter's under the umbrella of national guidelines that strengthened the structure of the organization. Increasing the international involvement of the NCNW, members participated in the International Council of Women and the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women during Mason's tenure.

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Vivian Carter Mason taping a message for the Crusade for Freedom Broadcast to be aired by Radio Free Europe, Date Unknown.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Josephine Baker (2nd from left) speaking with Vernice Sproggs of the Chicago Defender and Vivian Carter Mason (far right) at the piano in the parlor of the Council House in Washington, D.C., 1951.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R) Unidentified woman, Mary McLeod Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt,
Vivian Carter Mason, Ed Sullivan, and others at Brotherhood Luncheon, 1955.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Cabell Photography

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Vivian Carter Mason (left) listening to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak, Date Unknown.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Then Vice-President Richard Nixon greeting Vivian Carter Mason, 1950's.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



The San Francisco Junior Council presenting a bouquet of flowers to
Marian Anderson (seated), 1955.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R) Dorothy Ferebee, Dorothy Height, and Vivian Carter Mason, 1950s.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Vivian Carter Mason (center) listening to Eleanor Roosevelt (left) speak at Brotherhood Luncheon, 1955.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Vivian Carter Mason's installation as
President of the NCNW, 1953.
Photo Credit: Cabell Photo

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Vivian Carter Mason (left) and guest at Brotherhood Luncheon, 1955.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA

Dr. Dorothy Irene Height Fourth President of NCNW (1957-1998)

When she accepted the position of President, Dr. Dorothy Height had been active with the NCNW for nearly 20 years serving in several leadership positions. The four decades that she served spanned some of the most critical events of African American history. During the Civil Right's Era, Dr. Height worked toward better race relations and encouraged African Americans to vote through the "Wednesday's in Mississippi" project. She also gained tax exempt status for the NCNW in 1966, making it eligible for vital grants to fund several national and international social action programs. The original Council House headquarters at 1318 Vermont Avenue NW was also designated as a National Historic Site in 1982 and a National Park Service Site in 1994 under Dr. Height's leadership.

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Irene Height, Date Unknown.
Photo Credit: Pach Bros., NY

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Irene Height (front row, 3rd from left) and others receiving honorary doctorates during commencement ceremonies at Harvard University, 1970.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Irene Height speaking at the dedication of the Bethune Memorial Statue in Lincoln Park, 1974.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Presidents of the NCNW viewing a model of the Bethune Memorial Statue.
(L to R) Vivian Carter Mason, Dorothy Irene Height, and Dorothy Ferebee, Date Unknown.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Fred Harris Studios

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R): Rosa Slade Gragg, National Association of Colored Women's Clubs President,
and Dorothy Irene Height meeting with President Lyndon Johnson at the White House, 1960's.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Cecil W. Stoughton Photography

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R) Unidentified couple, Dorothy Irene Height, Ossie Davis, and Ruby Dee, at reception, 1960s.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Dorothy Irene Height and others at a wreath laying ceremony
at the Bethune Memorial Statue , 1970s.

Photo Credit: Unknown

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



Leaders of the Civil Rights movement.
(L to R) Roy Wilkins, Floyd McKissick, Dorothy Irene Height, A. Philip Randolph,
Whitney Young, and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1960s.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer.

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R): Unidentified man, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm ,
President Gerald Ford, and Dorothy Irene Height at the U.S. Capitol, 1970s.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Capitol Glogau Photograph

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA



(L to R) Bill Cosby, Camille Cosby, Tom Shriver, and Dorothy Irene Height
at a Kennedy Center Benefit in Washington, D.C., 1985.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of NPS, Unknown Photographer.

National Park Service



EXPERIENCE
YOUR
AMERICA

Images included in this photo gallery are from the National Archives for Black Women's History. Please contact the Archives staff at (202) 673-2402 if you wish to reproduce or otherwise use any of these images.